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ABSTRACT

This report explains that 2000-01 was the eighth year in which the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS) at the University of Dublin's Trinity College offered extracurricular foreign language modules to students who were not studying a foreign language as part of their degree course. The modules are intended to develop students' communication skills for purposes of study, travel, or work experience abroad during their undergraduate years and to enhance their academic qualifications, vocational prospects, and potential for future mobility. 2000-01 was the fourth year in which CLCS provided fully integrated modules in French and German for all junior and senior freshmen taking the degree course in Information and Communications Technology. After describing CLCS' commitment to a research and development ethos, program staffing, and future prospects, the report presents a full account of rates of enrollment, participation, and completion. It focuses on recruitment and participation rates, module design, assessment procedure design, and assessment results for the extracurricular modules and fully integrated modules. Finally, it offers the external examiners' reports. An appendix presents a summary of income and expenditure. (SM)

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University of Dublin
Trinity College

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University of Dublin - Trinity College

Report from the Centre for Language and Communication Studies on the eighth year of extracurricular foreign language modules for students of other disciplines and the third year of foreign language modules in the B.A. (Mod.) in Information and Communications Technology 1 October 2000–30 September 2001

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David Little
Director, CLCS

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Klaus Schwienhorst
Modules co-ordinator

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The foreign language modules that are the focus of this report were first established with financial assistance from the European Social Fund

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1 Introduction

David Little

1.1 Objectives, organization and funding

1.1.1 Extracurricular modules

2000–01 was the eighth year in which the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS) offered foreign language modules to students who were not studying a foreign language as part of their degree course. Modules in French and German have been offered since the inception of the scheme, Italian was introduced in 1995–6, and Spanish in 1997–8. A full account of rates of enrolment, participation and completion is provided in section 2 of this report.

The objectives of the modules are (i) to develop students' communication skills for purposes of study, travel or work experience abroad during their undergraduate years, and (ii) to enhance their academic qualifications, vocational prospects, and potential for future mobility.

Students can take language modules for one or two years; each year of study is complete in itself. Although students in Science and Arts (Letters) who successfully complete their language module have bonus marks added to their annual examination result, the modules are offered to students on a strictly extracurricular basis.

The modules were introduced in 1993–4 thanks to a special grant of £100,000 that the Higher Education Authority made from its European Social Fund allocation: the HEA wished to give the learning of foreign languages a more central role in the undergraduate curriculum. The HEA again made special grants available to fund the modules in 1994–5 (£58,000), 1995–6 (£52,000), 1996–7 (£56,000), and 1997–8 (£56,000). Early in 1999 the HEA indicated that what had previously been an annual ESF allocation would be part of the College's recurrent grant until further notice. In other words, the long-term future of the extracurricular language modules scheme was assured, at least at its present level of activity.

1.1.2 French and German modules within the B.A. (Mod.) course in Information and Communications Technology

2000–01 was the fourth year in which CLCS provided fully integrated modules in French and German for all junior and senior freshmen taking the degree course in Information and Communications Technology. These modules are shaped by the same general aims as the extracurricular modules, summarized above, and they are taught according to the same pedagogical principles; but they differ in two important respects. First, because they are a compulsory component of students' main course of study, they impose a variety of additional organizational and administrative demands; and second, in theme and linguistic content they focus on the world of information technology.

The ICT modules are funded from the provision made for this degree programme, so that they enjoy the same long-term security as the degree course itself.

1.2 Staffing

In 2000–01 the modules were co-ordinated by Klaus Schwienhorst and taught by Yann Dehiere, Jean-Martin Deniau, Anette Dressel, Mónica Canut López, Breffni O'Rourke, Klaus

Schwienhorst, Florence Signorini, and Helmut Sundermann. As regards the European Language Portfolio, pedagogical guidance and support were provided by Barbara Lazenby Simpson. The success of the modules and the plaudits that they earn from year to year from our external examiners (see section 3 of this report) are due to the commitment and skill of this team of full-time and part-time teachers and the support they draw from CLCS's research-and-development activities.

1.3 CLCS's commitment to a research-and-development ethos

CLCS has always delivered its language modules within a research-and-development loop. Currently our principal focuses for research and development are (i) the use of the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio as a tool for the organization of learning and learner self-assessment, and (ii) the further development of tandem language learning in partnership with the Fachhochschule Rhein-Sieg using CLCS's MOO (text-based virtual reality). These two activities are described in greater detail in section 2 of this report. Here it is worth noting (i) that CLCS has played a major role in the Council of Europe's piloting procedures, which were a prelude to the introduction of the European Language Portfolio on a large scale throughout Europe in 2001 (the European Year of Languages); and (ii) that the experience of distance learning we have gained from our involvement in international projects in tandem language learning should be of interest to other areas in College.

1.4 Future prospects

The language modules that are the focus of this report provide two models, one extracurricular and the other fully integrated, for the realization of the second/foreign language dimension of College's Broad Curriculum policy. Since their introduction the extracurricular modules have been subject to a high level of drop-out in Michaelmas term. On the whole, those students who complete extracurricular modules have a higher level of proficiency in their chosen language when they enrol for their module than those who drop out. This surely runs counter to the intention underlying the Broad Curriculum initiative. At the same time, the students who complete extracurricular language modules achieve a commendably high level of proficiency in their target language, which represents significant added value. The fully integrated modules are by definition proof against student drop-out. That they too deliver a high level of learner satisfaction is confirmed by the fact that at the end of 2000–01 a small group of senior freshmen requested the introduction of language modules for junior sophisters taking the B.A. (Mod.) in Information and Communications Technology (see 2.3.3 below).

Long-term funding support for the language modules was assured in 1999. In Trinity term 2001 CLCS made two permanent academic appointments designed to ensure the further development of the scheme: lectureships in applied linguistics with particular responsibility, respectively, for co-ordinating the modules and developing CLCS's language learning facilities and resources. The beginning of this new phase in the life of the language modules was marked by the installation of a new computer network and a complete overhaul of CLCS's computer-based support for language learning prior to the beginning of Michaelmas term 2001.

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2 Language modules in 2000–01

Klaus Schwienhorst

2.1 Extracurricular modules

2.1.1 Modules offered

The modules offered in 2000-01 were as follows:

Monday evening
- German for beginners in Arts, Science, and Engineering, Year 1
- German for beginners in Arts, Science and Engineering, Year 2
- Italian for beginners in Arts and Science, Year 1
- Italian for beginners in Arts and Science, Year 2
- Spanish for non-beginners in Arts and Science, year 1
- Spanish for non-beginners in Arts and Science, year 2

Tuesday evening
- French for non-beginners in Health Sciences, Year 1
- French for non-beginners in Arts, Science and Health Sciences, Year 2
- German for non-beginners in Engineering, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Arts, Science and Engineering, Year 2

Wednesday evening
- French for non-beginners in Arts, Year 1
- French for non-beginners in Science, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Arts, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Science, Year 1

2.1.2 Recruitment and rates of participation

The recruitment of students followed the same procedure as in previous years. Publicity and application forms were included in the mailing sent to incoming junior freshmen by the Admissions Office. Separate mailings were made to rising senior freshmen in Engineering (including MSISS) and Computer Science and to students who had completed Year 1 modules in 1999–2000.

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 summarize the rates of participation during the 23 weeks of the modules (expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled for each module).

In Table 2.1, initial confirmed enrolment refers to the number of registered students on the first attendance sheet in week 2. The final total recruitment adds to that number those students from waiting lists who were offered a place in subsequent weeks in Michaelmas term 2000. The percentage of students completing their module has been calculated in relation to the initial confirmed enrolment.

The pattern of decline in the levels of participation was more pronounced than in previous years. In particular, rates of completion of Year 1 modules were much lower than in 1999–2000: only 19% of students enrolled completed the modules, and two German non-beginner modules had to be cancelled due to lack of student interest. In the case of Year 2 modules, overall rates of completion were also significantly lower than in the previous year: 48% of the total enrolment completed the modules, compared with 92% in 1999–2000. However, the overall *number* of students completing Year 2 modules hardly changed. As noted in previous reports, it is inevitable that considerable attrition will occur during Michaelmas term as junior freshmen become fully aware of their study commitments and of the social opportunities available to them in College. This is clearly visible in Figure 2.1, which shows that participation decreased significantly after the third week of Michaelmas term. However, the

Module	Initial confirmed enrolment	Number attending first session	Final total recruitment	Number completing module
Year 1 modules				
German beginners in Arts, Science, & Engineering (Monday)	8 Arts 5 Science 12 Eng.	14 (56%)	25	4 (16%)
Spanish nonbeginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	6 Science 21 Arts	17 (63%)	27	5 (19%)
Italian beginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	20 Arts 19 Science	34 (87%)	41	14 (36%)
French non-beginners in Health Sciences (Tuesday)	11 Health Sc.	22 (200%)	25	3 (27%)
German non-beginners in Engineering (Tuesday)	29 Eng.	19 (66%)	29	4 (14%)
French non-beginners in Science (Wednesday)	49 Science	30 (61%)	64	15 (31%)
French non-beginners in Arts (Wednesday)	43 Arts	33 (77%)	53	8 (19%)
German non-beginners in Arts (Wednesday)	21 Arts	13 (62%)	23	0 (0%)
German non-beginners in Science (Wednesday)	39 Science	31 (79%)	40	0 (0%)
Year 1 total	**283 students**	**213 (75%)**	327	**53 (19%)**
Year 2 modules				
German beginners in Arts, Science & Engineering (Monday)	4 Science	3 (75%)	4	3 (75%)
Italian beginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	1 Science 8 Arts	3 (33%)	9	1 (11%)
French non-beginners in Arts, Science & Health Sc. (Tuesday)	16 Arts 7 Science 3 Health Sc. 1 Eng.	21 (78%)	27	14 (52%)
German non-beginners in Arts, Science & Engineering (Tuesday)	6 Arts 12 Science 9 Eng.	10 (37%)	27	11 (41%)
Spanish nonbeginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	3 Arts 3 Science	5 (83%)	6	2 (33%)
Year 2 total	**73 students**	**42 (62%)**	73	**31 (48%)**
Total	**356 students**	**255 (80%)**	**400**	**84 (24%)**

Table 2.1
Rates of participation

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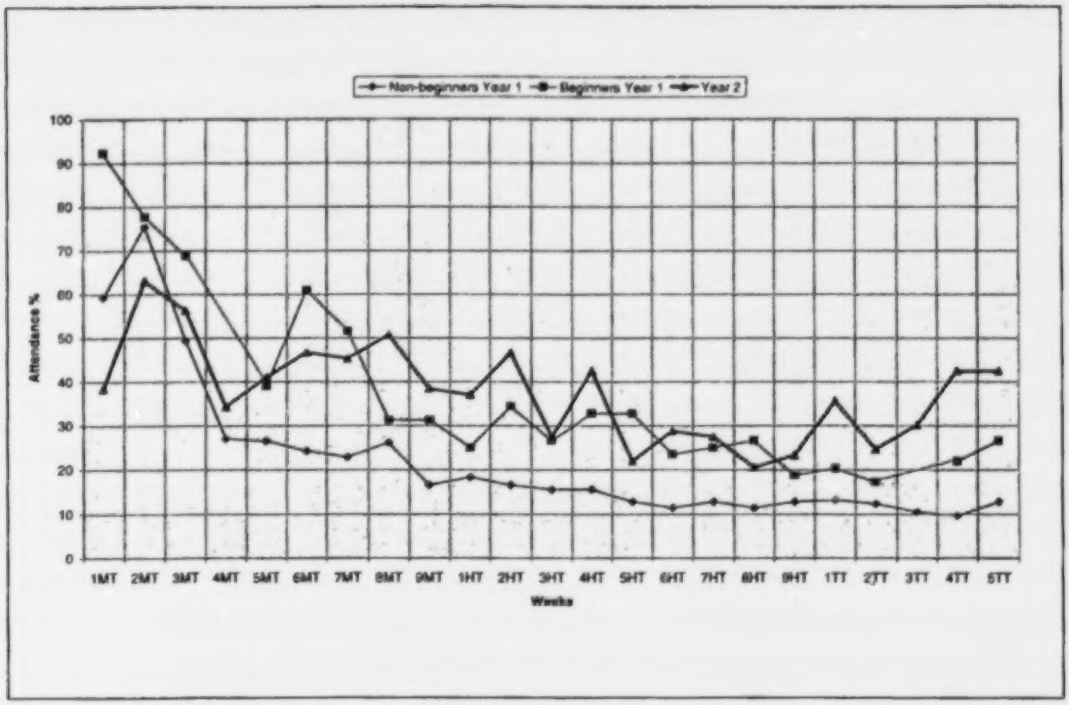

Figure 2.1
Rates of participation

relative stability of numbers for the remainder of the year confirms the commitment of a considerable number of students to what, after all, is an extracurricular course. In total, 84 students completed the modules in 2000-01 (24% of the initial confirmed enrolment).

2.1.3 Design of the modules

The project cycle structure introduced in 1997–98 was used again in all the modules. Following a period of induction in the first weeks of Michaelmas Term, each module comprised a series of four-week project cycles, each of which culminated in an oral presentation with associated written requirements. Projects are undertaken collaboratively by groups of four or five students. The rationale for such an approach is threefold. First, it facilitates use of the target language, which is a prerequisite for successful learning. Native speaker student assistants are employed to work with each group, and in this way the target language quickly becomes the natural medium of communication. Secondly, project work allows students to focus on topics that they find interesting and relevant: the task descriptions that are distributed at the beginning of each project cycle are broad enough to encompass a wide range of topics as well as proficiency levels. Students are explicitly encouraged to draw on their major areas of study in preparing their projects. Thirdly, the skills inherent in the preparation and presentation of projects are not only typical of good language learning practice but are also transferable to other domains, including the world of work. Among the skills that students must reflect on and develop are:

- the ability to work effectively as part of a small team, as well as on an individual basis;
- the use of digital resources during the research phase of a project;
- the effective presentation of information, using a variety of visual aids.

The commitment that most students showed to their projects and presentations confirms the appropriateness of this course design. In addition, both junior and senior freshman years completed a project called *Focus on Language*. This project is designed to engage learners with the target language in an

analytical way by having them prepare and modify form-focussed language-learning activities. Students have to choose an authentic French/German text and use it as the basis for designing a set of three related exercises and their solutions/answers. The project is supported by group tasks in which students evaluate one another's exercises. However, the assessment for this project is individual, thus affording all students the opportunity to demonstrate their own capabilities.

CLCS has continued to pilot the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (ELP) with students taking the language modules. In 2000–01 each student in Year 2 received a copy of the revised ELP at the beginning of Michaelmas term and it served as the focus for language learning activities throughout the year. The revised ELP has three components: a *language passport*, which summarizes the owner's linguistic identity; a *language biography*, which provides a focus for planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning process; and a *dossier*, in which the owner keeps work done in the course of the year, personal glossaries, and source material used to support projects.

In the 2000–01 modules programme, the use of a learner dossier was continued and further developed. All workplans, e-mail exchanges or printouts that had contributed to the body of work for any project were collected in the dossier. During 2000–01, the dossier requirements were formalized and students were expected to produce a personal vocabulary list, a full bibliography, written text, and source documents on the same day as their oral presentation took place. This requirement was met with differing degrees of commitment and, while some learners demonstrated a considerable capacity to organize their work, others tended to submit their work late and incomplete.

2.1.4 Design of assessment procedures

The practice of continuous assessment, first introduced in 1998–99, was maintained: students were given marks by their teachers for each of the three project presentations in Michaelmas and Hilary terms. The same rating grids were used as in the end-of-year examinations.

The end-of-year assessments were held over two weeks towards the end of Trinity term. As in previous years, they comprised (i) a pencil-and-paper test consisting of a 100-word dictation and a battery of 4 C-tests, designed

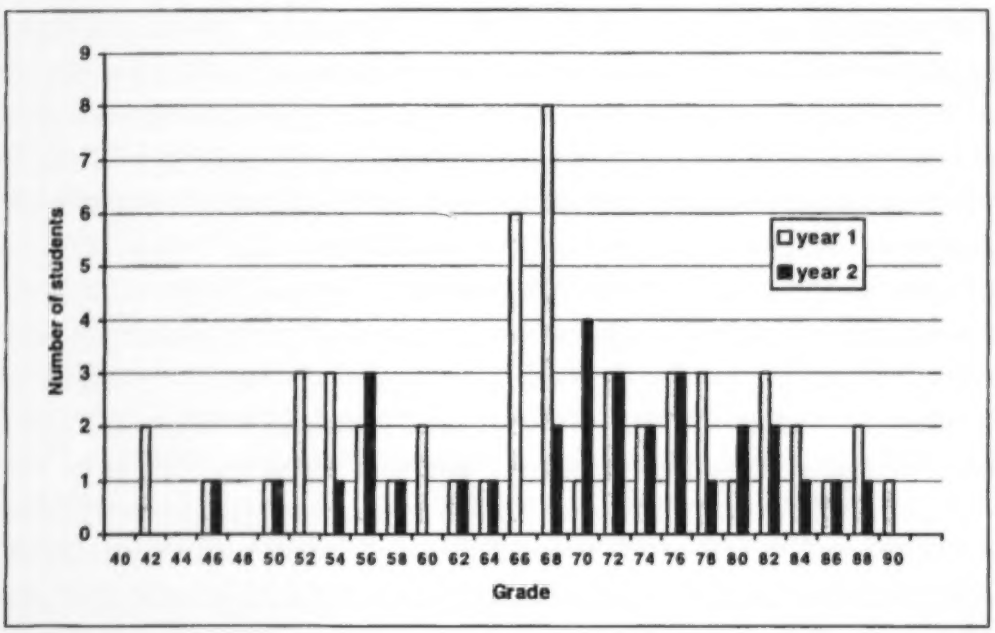

Figure 2.2
Extracurricular modules – assessment results (in detail)

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Module	Student nos.	Average mark	Highest mark	Lowest mark
Year 1 modules				
French for non-beginners in Arts	8	73%	90%	65%
French for non-beginners in Science	15	66%	83%	42%
French for non-beginners in Health Sc.	3	80%	82%	78%
German for non-beginners in Arts	0	-	-	-
German for non-beginners in Science	0	-	-	-
German for non-beginners in Engineering	4	64%	78%	51%
Spanish for non-beginners in Arts	2	72%	76%	68%
Spanish for non-beginners in Science	2	74%	76%	72%
Spanish for non-beginners in Engineering	1	-	65%	-
German for beginners in Arts	1	-	84%	-
German for beginners in Science	1	-	86%	-
German for beginners in Engineering	2	86%	87%	85%
Italian for beginners in Arts	4	61%	67%	53%
Italian for beginners in Science	10	56%	68%	42%
Year 2 modules				
French for non-beginners in Arts	11	67%	81%	54%
French for non-beginners in Science	1	-	69%	-
French for non-beginners in Health Sc.	1	-	56%	-
French for non-beginners in Engineering	1	-	78%	-
German for non-beginners in Arts	1	-	83%	-
German for non-beginners in Science	4	74%	79%	70%
German for non-beginners in Engineering	6	79%	88%	70%
German for beginners in Arts	0	–	-	-
German for beginners in Science	3	59%	72%	50%
German for beginners in Engineering	0	–	-	-
Spanish for non-beginners	2	70%	71%	68%
Italian for beginners	1	-	45%	-

Table 2.2
Assessment results

to measure students' general underlying control of the target language system, and (ii) the presentation of their final project. New pencil-and-paper tests were designed and piloted with native speakers in the course of the year. Project presentations were marked by two examiners working independently of each other.

2.1.5 Assessment results

53 students took the end-of-year assessments for Year 1 modules and 31 students took the end-of-year assessments for Year 2 modules. Their results are summarized in Table 2.2, which shows the range of student performance classified by module and by faculty. Figure 2.2 shows the assessment results in detail, while Figure 2.3 shows the assessment results according to class.

Of the students taking Year 1 modules, 42% were placed in the first class, 34% achieved a II.1 grade, and 17% achieved a II.2. These

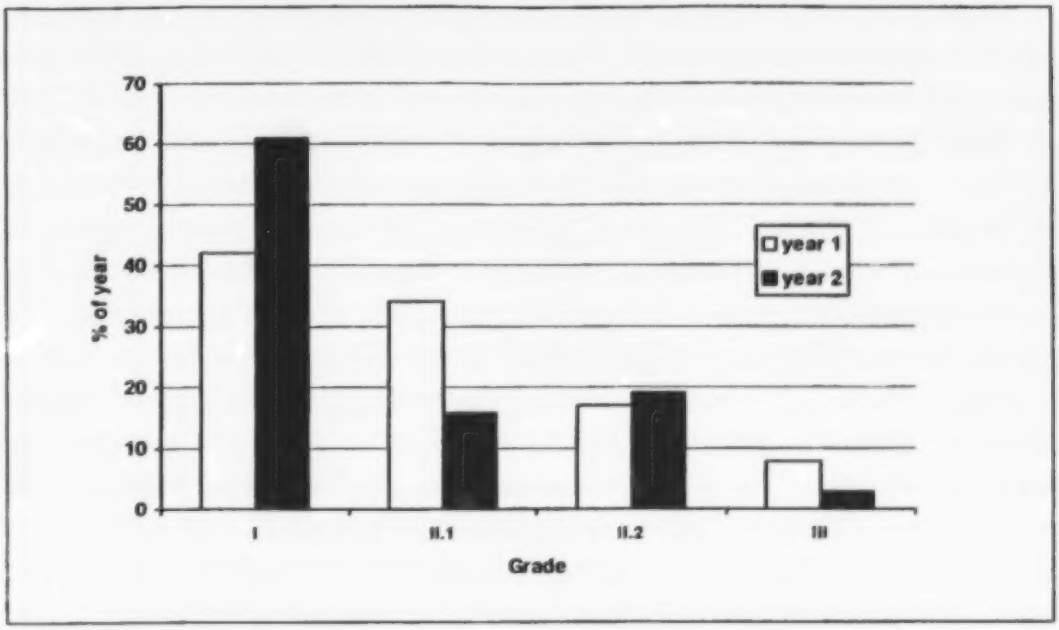

Figure 2.3
Extracurricular modules – assessment results (grades and percentage of year)

results are better than the results in 1999–2000, where only 7% achieved the first class. Of the students taking Year 2 modules, 61% were placed in the first class (16% in 1999–2000), 16% achieved a II.1 grade, and 19% achieved a II.2.

Each year a high proportion of students taking the extracurricular modules achieve I and II.1 grades. In 2000–01, this number was far higher than in previous years. This, together with the low completion rate, reflects the fact (pointed out in previous reports) that the modules tend to be completed by students who are more than averagely skilled at managing their time and study commitments and are strongly motivated to gain the best possible advantage from their undergraduate years in College. Teachers frequently comment on the excellent quality of Year 2 students in particular.

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2.2 Fully integrated modules

2.2.1 Rates of participation

Students taking the B.A. (Mod.) in Information and Communications Technology are obliged to take a non-beginner module in either French or German in both their freshman years. They decide which language they will study on the basis of their school subjects and Leaving Certificate results. In 2000–01, 169 students took these modules, as follows:

	Total	French	German
JF	90	73	17
SF	79	52	27

The ICT modules comprise one two-hour contact session per week and at least one tutorial meeting with each student per term. Attendance at all sessions is compulsory. During tutorials, learning difficulties are discussed and work is assigned which addresses individual weaknesses. The basis of tutorial sessions in 2000–01 was a written task assigned to each student at the beginning of the academic year. The texts students submitted were analysed by tutors and used

as a focus for tutorial discussion. Students were then assigned a larger task (involving approximately six hours' work) to be completed in advance of the next tutorial session.

2.2.2 Course design

The ICT modules are broadly similar in structure to the extracurricular modules: an introductory period of induction followed by four project cycles. In the junior freshman year the topics for project presentations include a public hearing/debate, discussing a particular social or environmental issue; the creation of a web site; and the compilation of an information booklet, containing general or specific information of interest to visitors to France or Germany. The emphasis is on raising levels of general language proficiency in French and German, as well as developing those skills necessary for the collaborative preparation of projects.

In the Senior Freshman year, the modules are designed with students' principal areas of study in mind. Thus the project topics include a report on a particular area of computer technology; a review of a French/German web site; and a discussion of the role of computers in society.

In addition, both junior and senior freshmen completed a *Focus on Language* project, similar to one included in the extracurricular modules (see above). ICT students were encouraged to take computer-related texts as the basis of their project.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was also implemented with ICT students from the beginning of Michaelmas term. They were required to use it in the same way as students taking the extracurricular modules (again see above), and in their case too the self-assessment process proved successful. Self-assessment counted for 10% of the final mark in the ICT language modules.

As in 1998–99, the dossier component of the ELP raised two important issues. First, it was necessary to pay particular attention to conventions of citation and attribution. Students were still lax in this regard, especially in relation to electronic sources such as texts that they had downloaded from the World Wide Web. Secondly, it was again necessary to adopt a firm stance with regard to the use of computer software to translate into French or German texts that had been originally written in English. The issues of plagiarism and machine-translated text will continue to be addressed in 2001–02, and

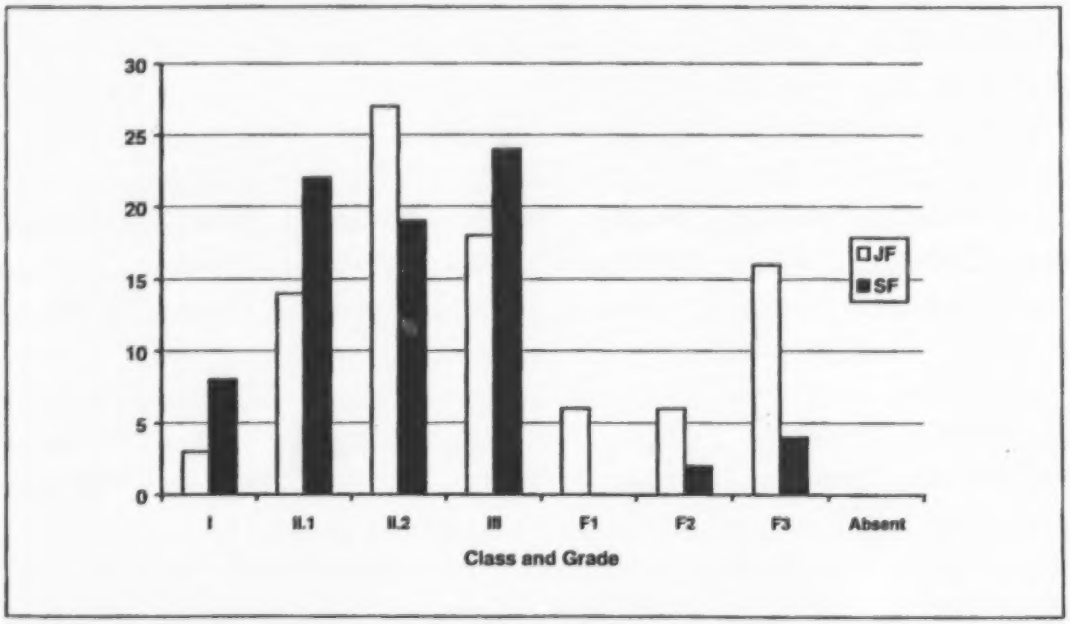

Figure 2.4
BA ICT final assessment results (numbers)

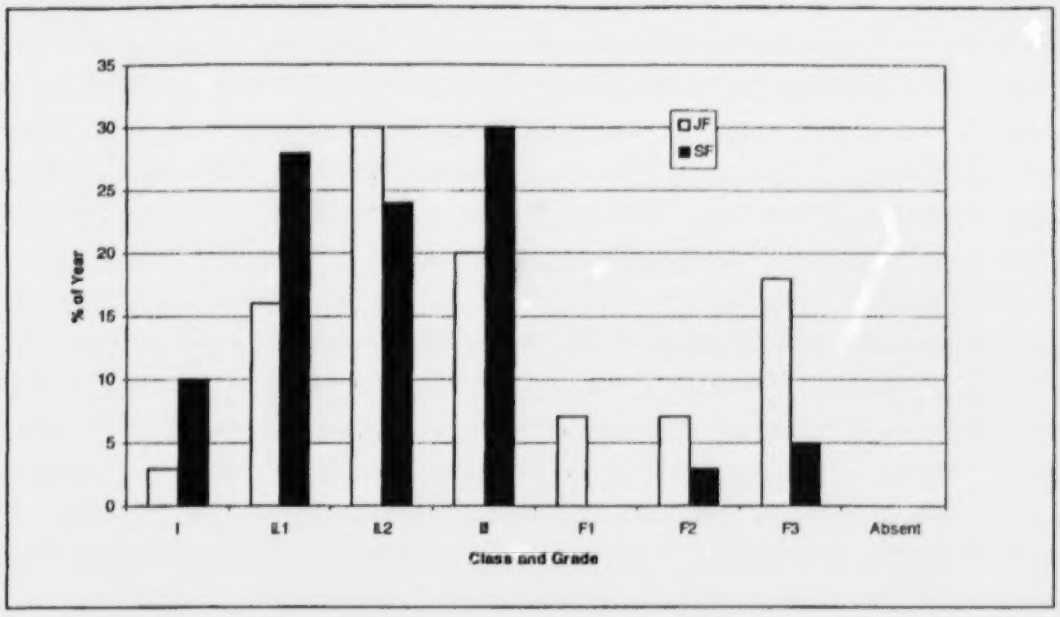

Figure 2.5
BA ICT final assessment results (percentage of year)

more specific guidelines, in accordance with College's general guidelines on plagiarism, will be included in next year's course booklet.

2.2.3 Assessment results

Students taking the B.A. (Mod.) ICT language modules were assessed in a similar way to those taking the extracurricular modules: continuous assessment in Michaelmas and Hilary terms and formal end-of-year assessment (including teacher-monitored self-assessment) in Trinity term. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 provide a graphic overview of the assessment results. Of the 90 junior freshmen, 3% achieved a I grade, 16% achieved a II.1, 30% achieved a II.2, and 20% achieved a III; 31% of junior freshmen failed the end-of-year examination. Of the 79 senior freshmen, 10% achieved a I grade, 28% achieved a II.1, 24% achieved a II.2, and 30% achieved a III; 8% failed the end-of-year examination. As in previous years, senior freshmen results were on average better than junior freshman results.

It is noticeable that compared to 1999–2000, more students achieved higher marks, while at the same time more students failed the course. Most students who failed did so by a substantial margin.

2.3 Future directions

2.3.1 MOOs

In 1999–2000 students taking the ICT German modules had been involved in a bilateral MOO tandem project with the Fachhochschule Rhein-Sieg near Bonn, Germany. A similar project was again organized in 2000–01. This time, students collaborated on a reformulation task based on computer-related texts, which students discussed both in real time in the MOO and via e-mail. Again, following the principles of tandem language learning, in each MOO session the students worked for half an hour in English and half an hour in German. Sessions were recorded automatically and sent to each individual student and the teacher for evaluation, reflection, and future reference. Like the project in 1999–2000, which yielded data for a successful Ph.D. thesis, the 2000–01 MOO also yielded data for a Ph.D. thesis, to be submitted in Michaelmas term 2002. It is hoped to introduce similar MOO and/or e-mail projects to the French ICT modules in 2001–02.

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2.3.2 Tutorial work in ICT

In 2001–02 tutorial work will focus on a variety of tasks that individual students need to accomplish during the year, depending on their individual weaknesses. We intend to employ native speaker exchange students to help with the correction of tutorial work.

2.3.3 Junior Sophister option for ICT students

At the end of 2000–01 a small number of SF ICT students (seven for French and six for German) asked to be allowed to continue with their language learning on an extracurricular basis. We decided to create a special evening module for them, consisting of fewer contact sessions and longer project cycles.

2.3.4 Faculty of Health Sciences

It has been agreed that students in the Faculty of Health Sciences will be offered places in the extracurricular modules in their fourth and fifth years, in addition to existing arrangements. This is another step towards the implementation of College's Broad Curriculum policy.

3 External examiners' reports

3.1 French

Dr Vanessa Davies
Director
Diplomatic Service Language Centre
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London

CLCS provides modular foreign language courses for students whose primary discipline focus is not languages. In 2000–01 I acted for the third successive academic year as external examiner in French for the following programmes: extracurricular French modules for junior and senior freshmen; fully integrated modules for junior and senior freshmen taking the B.A. (Mod.) in Information and Communications Technology.

In my reports for 1998–99 and 1999–2000 I commented in detail on the high quality of these programmes overall. I hope not to be too repetitive in this year's report. The effectiveness of the teaching and administrative teams involved has clearly not diminished this year. Such is the CLCS's commitment to quality assurance that when I was prevented from attending the oral examinations in person at barely twenty-four hours' notice, arrangements were made to record on video the performances of the students I was due to observe. I am most grateful to the academic and technical staff involved, and indeed to the students themselves, for their highly professional response to a difficult situation which was none of their making. The comments that follow are based on course documentation and students' written assignments as well as video recordings of students' performance which were sent to me in London for review.

3.1.1 General comments

I have commented in previous reports on the innovative basic concept of these modules and the commendable way in which the language learning process is structured and developed within the constraints imposed by the timetable and group make-up. Further elements of analysis, reflection and self-assessment have been introduced this year and the European Language Portfolio continues to be used successfully. The modules continue therefore to produce *good language learners*, which is as important an outcome as the level of communicative competence actually achieved.

Students are thoroughly prepared for the modules through induction and a detailed

programme handbook and guide to self-access study. The quality of these latter – their breadth of coverage, specialist advice and encouraging approach – contribute significantly to the impression students must gain of the programme at the outset, and they engender high expectations of them as learners. I have seen handbooks for full language degree programmes in other universities which are quite inferior to these documents. No student could feel unsupported when embarking on what for most is a very new way of working in a discipline of which they have had little previous or similar experience. It is clear that the information and support continue to be provided at the same level throughout the year.

3.1.2 Extracurricular modules

French for non-beginners 2 – I reviewed video recordings of five group presentations, two written dossiers and the master assessment guidelines and rating sheets, as well as the course programme documentation.

Many of the comments I have made in previous years continue to apply. The students completing this programme are highly motivated and committed as they are fulfilling its stringent requirements over and above their main, credit-bearing degree programmes.

Student oral presentations were generally very well prepared and confidently and fluently executed. In some cases the diligence of the preparation led to a false impression of language competence as a small number of students coped far less well in the unstructured question-and-answer sessions which followed the presentations. The choice of subjects for presentations had clearly involved students in extending their knowledge of France and its regions.

The assessment guidelines were once again extremely thorough and clear and consistent with the best in the field. The application of the guidelines to the rating sheets was also clear and consistent. I cannot comment on the marks awarded for specific students, but the presentation evidence indicates that they are performing within the expected global levels of attainment, one or two students approaching the maximum expected level.

The written dossiers linked to the presentations show students complying with the project specifications and using a range of resources to complete their assignments. Many of the non-foreign language skills that they draw on to do so are transferable to other disciplines and beyond academic study: internet searching in the foreign language, multi-media presentation, word processing, etc.

I cannot comment on any marks awarded for specific students' written assignments but again, the assessment guidelines were extremely thorough and clear and consistent with the best in the field. The application of the guidelines to the rating sheets was also clear and consistent. Of the two dossiers I inspected, one student was performing within the expected level of attainment and the second just beyond the maximum level of expected attainment. It is vital that students continue to be obliged to complete assignments that focus on the improvement of their structural knowledge of the language and that efforts continue to be made to transfer passive knowledge to active communication.

3.1.3 B.A. (Mod.) Information and Communications Technology

Junior Freshmen – I reviewed the tapes of the project presentations and two written dossiers. While it remains the case that on average students taking the optional extracurricular modules are more active and confident communicators in the foreign language than the ICT students, the disparity between the two groups appears to have lessened somewhat (and more so for the senior freshmen – see below). Performance overall is at the lower end of the expected level of attainment. Written and oral production is marred for a significant proportion of students by errors and generally weak control of some basic structures. In a small number of cases pronunciation is very weak and not readily comprehensible by any but the most sympathetic bilingual listener. But awareness of the need to work systematically on these areas is clearly present in both teaching staff and students, and the rigour of the correction process and its "incentive" scheme is effective.

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Not surprisingly, many students on this programme have had recourse to the Web for materials on which to base their work. The teaching team has responded appropriately to both the positive and negative sides of this: they have encouraged creativity and research but have made absolutely clear what constitutes plagiarism and been rigorous in their application of the necessary sanctions.

Senior Freshmen – It is very pleasing to see the extent of progress students on this programme have made – both in specific cases as revealed by reference to my notes on the performance of the same students as junior freshmen in 1999–2000, and generally when the performance of the current junior freshmen is compared with the that of the current senior freshmen. While students of both genders have improved, female students remain on the whole more confident, fluent and accurate users of the foreign language and display better linguistic strategies for coping with the unpredictable. But all seemed significantly more engaged and motivated than in previous years.

The final projects focus on the broad theme *Computers and Society*, and individual subjects are more wide-ranging than in previous years – from e-commerce to robots and artificial intelligence, censorship and advertising, net security and communication. Command of technical vocabulary at its strongest for the three years during which I have been involved in the programme and the structure of the work completed on vocabulary acquisition is impressive. In the dossiers I examined, the positive link between the close vocabulary work and confidence in the unstructured parts of the presentation is evident. Some students are more judicious than others in drawing materials from the Web to support their vocabulary work, and those who have done so uncritically or without ancillary linguistic development of the material discovered flounder with (linguistically simple) technical questions in the post-presentation discussion.

Overall, performance in the oral presentations was acceptably fluent and confident and all the students I observed were performing well within the expected maximum global level of attainment. Performance could be improved further by

- increased exposure to authentic TV reportage in French on scientific and social issues
- focussed pronunciation practice, especially in areas known to present difficulties to Anglophone learners
- anticipation strategies: otherwise very well prepared students were sometimes let down by lack of familiarity with words or ideas that were predictable components of the discussion of their subject area.

The comments made above in relation to the assessment guidelines and rating sheets used for the extracurricular modules apply equally to those used for the ICT modules, so I will not repeat them.

The quality of presentation of the written dossiers is generally very high indeed and reflects the acquisition of valuable transferable skills. Students are always encouraged to see the final product as the culmination of earlier efforts, reinforcing the message that for language learners, awareness of process is fundamental in achieving the competence level aimed for.

Awareness – self-reflection, analysis, evaluation – of the language learning process has become a distinguishing feature of the CLCS programmes over the three years of my association with them. This has been further refined this year by the introduction of a set of structured consciousness-raising and self-awareness evaluation methods, to be included in students' ELPs. Dr Lazenby Simpson is to be congratulated on this interesting initiative. In her own words

> *Initially each student carried out a general self-assessment in relation to the Common European Framework and identified strengths and weaknesses. Then each project cycle was accompanied by a pre-project activity and a post-project self-assessment and reflection (to be carried out in parallel with video-playback and feedback sessions). The Focus on Language project was treated differently in that the sheet was held for the duration of the project and required students to think about what they were doing and why. Finally students were asked to carry out a general self-assessment and to record their learning and language gains over the year.*

The purpose of this activity was two-fold: first to create a focus for reflection and self-assessment at relevant points during the programme, to feed into the dossier section of the ELP; and secondly to provide some longitudinal data about the growth of awareness and ability to articulate different parts of the learning process.

I have not seen any of the data, but the exercise to gather it is well-conceived and appropriately structured and presented. I look forward with considerable professional interest to the publication of the data and its analysis in a relevant academic journal.

We continue to have much to learn from the successes of the CLCS team, which is now well-established as a leader in the field. It is a privilege to have been associated with CLCS and I hope it is able to maintain that lead in the future.

3.2 German

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3.2.1 Introductory remarks

In my third year as external examiner for the CLCS German modules I was, as in the two previous years, very well briefed for my task by the staff of CLCS, and especially by Klaus Schwienhorst, the modules co-ordinator. My schedule was well planned, I was given all the information I needed, and I was also given ample time to ask questions and to look at the materials available. I would like to thank CLCS staff, especially the teachers of German, for their co-operation and their patience.

3.2.2 Background to the assessment

The final oral exams took place this year on Monday 30 April and Tuesday 1 May. As in previous years, they consisted of presentations of projects the students had been working on during the preceding weeks. The presentations were followed by questions from the examiners. I saw the following classes: junior and senior freshmen taking the B.A. (Mod.) in Information and Communications Technology; junior and senior freshmen taking the extracurricular German modules for beginners and non-beginners. During the presentations both examiners used evaluation grids developed by CLCS for this kind of examination. The evaluation grids were sent to me a few days after the exams so that I could compare the examiners' results with my own observations, for which I had used the same grids.

During my stay in Dublin I also had several talks with Klaus Schwienhorst, this year's project co-ordinator, both before and after the exam sessions I attended. He introduced me to a number of new aspects with respect to the structure and the methodological approaches in the modules and provided me with all kinds of materials related to the courses. I also talked to the other teachers of German, Helmut Sundermann and Breffni O'Rourke.

A very important new source for the evaluation this year was a set of video tapes which were made of students' presentations during the year and copied for me. These tapes are very helpful as they make an in-depth analysis of the students' performance possible. They also show the progress the students made during the academic year. I was also provided with a number of written dossiers that the students had put together to support their project.

3.2.3 Course design

The overall design of the courses has remained unchanged for the academic year 2000–01. Both for the integrated ICT modules and for the extracurricular modules, project work is the main methodological approach. The projects of the ICT students focused on general topics and on topics related to their subject of study (junior freshmen: public hearing, website creation, information booklet; senior freshmen: software review, technology report, web resources review). The projects for the beginners' and non-beginners' extracurricular modules were based on similar topics. One project in each of the courses was entitled *Focus on Language*. This project, which is approached from different angles in each of the courses, is dedicated to developing students' awareness of language in general and of the foreign language in particular. The

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importance of such awareness-raising activities in language learning cannot be overestimated; and I believe that the design of the CLCS courses is particularly convincing because such a module is included.

Self-access and self-assessment are two other components that are of importance in CLCS's course design, and they were even more strongly emphasized in this year's courses. In the course programmes (which are clearly written and well-structured) students are urged to devote more time than their two weekly contact hours to increase their competence in the foreign language. In order to help them with this task CLCS has compiled a *Guide to Self-Access Study*, which provides information on the resources available for self-access learning (film and video, satellite television, audio cassettes, computer programs, the Internet). The guide also gives tips about how to organize language learning and information on how to improve language skills – pronunciation, comprehension, vocabulary – through individual effort. This guide to self-access study must be seen as an integral part of the language modules, which are designed in accordance with the guiding principles of modern learning psychology and the findings of second language acquisition research.

Self-assessment, introduced in 1999–2000, has become particularly important this year. Regular self-assessment is carried out using the European Language Portfolio. During their module students use a number of evaluation sheets based on ELP evaluation criteria: a pre-task evaluation exercise which familiarizes students with different types of evaluation criteria is followed by a first self-assessment sheet and then, after the first project, by a post-project self-assessment focused on the group and their performance during the presentation. This self-assessment procedure is repeated for the second project. Self-assessment of the focus-on-language project is obtained using a different grid. At the end of the year a final self-assessment sheet is handed out to the students and they are expected to evaluate their overall progress during the year. According to the CLCS course designers, the purpose of the activity is to create a focus for reflection and self-assessment at relevant moments during the programme. This goal coincides, of course, with one of the main aims of learner autonomy, viz. developing learners' capacity to evaluate their own learning. Here again this new element in course design is very convincing from the perspective of modern learning theory.

One new component was introduced into the senior freshman ICT module this year, the so-called MOO project. This consisted of three MOO sessions during which students collaborated in real time with a group of German students learning English. Students in both groups first discussed and then decided on a topic of their choice in the MOO; in the second session they discussed their topic in the foreign language and afterwards wrote a text on it. The written text was sent to the partner who was expected to reformulate it. During the last MOO session students discussed in turn the partner's text and their changes. I believe that this a very attractive task and I recommend its introduction, if possible, into all the language modules.

On the whole, then, CLCS language modules have become even more attractive than last year. Although they were admirably designed already before, the new components – a strong emphasis on self-assessment, strong recommendations with respect to the use of self-access facilities and resources, and intelligent use of new technologies – make them a pedagogically sound learning environment which could become a model for all adult language learning.

3.2.4 The European Language Portfolio

I already underlined the importance of the European Language Portfolio when describing the new components of the modules and the ELP's function as an instrument for self-evaluation. I would like to add here that the ELP not only facilitates self-evaluation procedures but also influences course organization and course content. From what I saw during the project presentations it became clear to me that by self-evaluating specific skills students develop more interest in these skills and try to increase them either by themselves or with the help of their teachers. So in the CLCS language modules the ELP has a double function, it helps to organize self-evaluation and it restructures the courses themselves. In this way the ELP continuously

introduces innovative elements into the courses, avoiding never-changing textbook-like course content.

3.2.5 Assessment procedures

Assessment sources were more numerous than in earlier years. Apart from assessment *in praesentia* during the project presentations my sources included the assessors' evaluation grids, video recordings of former presentations, and written dossiers prepared by different groups of students. For technical reasons I had no access to the self-assessment sheets; it would have been very interesting to compare self-assessment with other-assessment, but this will probably become a CLCS research project.

3.2.6 Students' oral presentations

During the two previous years one of my main concerns with students' oral presentations was the problem they had with their pronunciation. There can be no doubt that most of this year's students still had a rather strong accent in their oral German due to interference from English (interestingly, this accent was much less developed in a small number of students who, being of Eastern European or Asian descent, learned English only as a second language), but on the whole there was a tendency towards a more German-like pronunciation. I believe that this is due to the strong emphasis that is put on pronunciation both in the course programmes and in the *Guide to Self-Access Study*, which encourages students to work on their pronunciation. The methods proposed here are excellent, and it would be interesting to know how many students have made use of these training facilities.

Another point that I mentioned in my 1999–2000 report with respect to oral presentations has to do with presentation skills. I suggested that many student groups had difficulties in presenting the results of their project work, not because of linguistic problems but because they lacked presentation skills. In this year's presentations I witnessed some improvement. I believe that this has something to do with the fact that the presentations were video-taped and that students could look at these tapes afterwards, seeing for the first time how they behaved when presenting in a foreign language. It might be a good idea to make presentation (like language) a project topic in one of the project cycles and to have students analyse some of their video-taped presentations. It might also be a good idea to introduce presentation software like PowerPoint into project work. The fact that such software makes it necessary to reflect more precisely on the content of a slide than when working with conventional overhead slides also has a very beneficial effect for the language learning process.

On the whole, I believe that the progress students made in their oral German in such a short period of time shows the effectiveness of the methodology developed in CLCS; it also shows the devotion of their teachers, who are not only available during courses but also offer tutorials and all kinds of help all over the year.

3.2.7 Students' written work

This year I had at my disposal several written dossiers from different projects. Course regulations prescribe that students hand in their preparatory work in written form so that teachers can judge their abilities in written German. Students are urged not to prepare their oral presentations entirely in written form; they should, however, hand in vocabulary lists, texts or other sources that they used in preparing their presentation, and an overall plan of what they are going to say.

The students' dossiers are of varying length and quality. Students who judge themselves more competent tend to formulate their written dossier in less detail, whereas students who feel less competent write longer texts. It is worth noting that the quality of the written products was better than last year. Although students still made quite a number of spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes were less frequent. This might have something to do with the fact that more revision seemed to have taken place. It might be a good idea to urge students during the focus-on-language project to do more for their spelling in German.

3.2.8 Concluding remarks

As a conclusion to this year's report I can only repeat what I said last year and the year before. The CLCS language modules are

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admirably designed, based on the most recent learning- theoretical, pedagogical and language acquisition research; they are highly successful when judged from the learner's perspective; they are highly flexible and creative, introducing innovations year after year. What I like most about them is their clarity of structure: students enrolling in these courses are very well taken care of, by their teachers, by CLCS, and by a number of helpful brochures and leaflets. In this way an environment is created which fosters very efficient language learning.

Appendix
Summary of income and expenditure

Income		
Brought forward from 1999–2000	£76,080	
Extracurricular modules	£85,000	
BAICT modules	£46,000	
Miscellaneous income	£351	
Total		**£207,431**
Expenditure		
Pay costs	£98,690	
Equipment	£47,194	
Books, journals and learning materials	£924	
Stationery, photocopying and printing	£240	
Academic fees	£3,830	
Travel, accommodation and entertainment	£951	
Miscellaneous	£1,029	
Total		**£152,858**
Carried forward to 2001–02		**£54,573**

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